

# Foreign Travel Training



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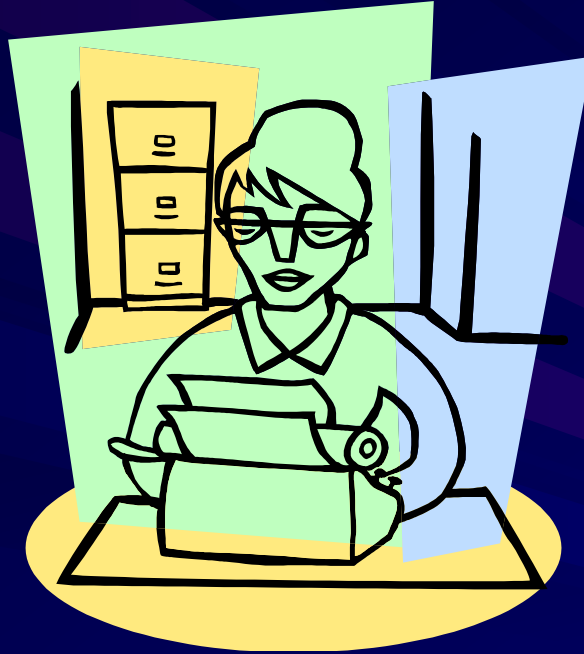
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# Administrative Requirements



# What is the NOAA Travel Office's (NTO) role regarding foreign travel?

It is the NOAA Travel Office's (NTO) responsibility to ensure that employees traveling abroad on official business have all of the necessary travel documentation in place prior to travel. Necessary travel documentation includes:

- an approved travel authorization
- a valid official passport
- visas when applicable
- a defensive travel briefing



# What is the role of the foreign travel contact?

It is the foreign travel contact's responsibility to ensure that ALL necessary documentation is completed and included in the foreign travel package prior to submission to the NTO. In addition, the foreign travel contact will:

- serve as a liaison between their respective Line/Staff Office and the NTO
- answer basic questions on foreign travel procedures
- advise on lead times for passports and visas
- advise on appropriate forms to use
- check status of applications with NTO
- ensure that instructions on where to return the finalized foreign travel package are included in the *foreign travel checksheet*

# What resource should I use for foreign travel requirements?

The best resource for foreign travel requirements is the NOAA Travel Office website:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/travel.html>.

Our website contains up-to-date information on the following:

- Foreign Travel Contact Listing
- Foreign Travel Requirements
- Official Passport Requirements
- Official Visas Requirements
- Links to All Foreign Travel Forms
- Links to Relevant Travel Websites

# Who has the authority to approve foreign travel?

- Officials listed in *NTR, Chapter 301-2.5*
- CFO/CAO, NWS
- Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy, NWS
- CIO, NWS
- Directors, Financial Management Centers, NWS
- Executive Director, OAR
- Directors, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research Laboratories, OAR
- Director, National Sea Grant College Program, OAR
- Director, National Undersea Research Program, OAR
- Director, Office of Global Programs, OAR
- Director, Strategic Planning Office, Program Planning and Integration (PPI)
- Foreign travel for Presidential Appointees must be authorized by the Under Secretary and Administrator.
- Foreign travel for the Director, Marine and Aviation Operations Centers and Director, Commissioned Personnel Center will be authorized by the Director, NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations.
- Foreign travel for Assistant Administrators of Line Offices and Directors of Staff Offices, will be authorized by the Under Secretary and Administrator, Assistant Secretary and Deputy Administrator, or the Deputy Under Secretary.
- *(All requests for foreign travel will be authorized and processed in accordance with DOC Travel Handbook, Chapter 306, and NTR, Chapter 306.)*

# Who processes foreign travel packages for NOAA?

The NOAA Travel Office (NTO) processes all foreign travel packages.

# What is a “complete” foreign travel package?

A complete foreign travel package consists of:

- 1) a completed “Foreign Travel Checklist”; *See NTR, Chapter 306-7.1*
- 2) Approved travel authorization with a travel authorization number assigned by the Line/Staff Office. The employee’s title must be shown on the travel authorization, as well as their grade and date of birth annotated in the remarks section of the travel authorization;
- 3) a copy of the “Defensive Travel Briefing”; Defensive Travel Briefings are submitted annually. *See NTR, Chapter 306-7.2* and
- 4) passport forms, passport photos (which must meet Department of State (DOS requirements), and passports;
- 5) if applicable, visa photos (which must meet the country’s visa requirements), visa applications, and letters of invitation.

Please note: Your Line or Staff Office may have additional internal requirements.



# What happens when an incomplete foreign travel package is submitted?

Your line office contact will be notified via e-mail of the missing documentation/information. **NOTE:** missing documentation/information will cause delays in the processing of your travel package which may result in the trip being delayed or canceled. See

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/travel.html>

for a current foreign travel contact listing.

# Is a “Defensive Travel Briefing” required for foreign travel?

Yes. “Defensive Travel Briefings” are required for all employees including invitational travelers on foreign travel. The “Defensive Travel Briefing” consists of a power point presentation. The information must be read, and submitted and a certificate is printed at the end. That certificate must be submitted to NTO annually. The certificate confirms that the traveler has read the presentation. Completed foreign travel packages will not be returned to the traveler until the certificate is received by the NTO.

# What ensures my safety as a Government employee traveling on official business abroad?

- Sign the official passport immediately upon receipt.
- Renew passports 6 months before they expire.
- Obtain visas for any in-transit travel.
- Ensure that country clearance cables are processed by your Line Office's servicing International Activities Office or by your Staff Office.



# How can I help ensure foreign travel packages will be processed in time for my travel?

Provide adequate processing-time for foreign travel packages by using the following procedures:

- Plan ahead - Determine well ahead of travel dates the documentation needed, i.e., an approved foreign travel authorization, an annual briefing, an official passport, and whether or not visas are necessary. Separate documentation is required for each traveler. Always provide the NTO with an office contact name and phone number.
- Act promptly - Allow the proper processing-time necessary to obtain passports and visas. Passports/visas will not be sent to you until **all** documentation is received.

**What are the processing-time requirements for foreign travel packages that do not require visas or passports?**

A seven business day processing-time is required for foreign travel packages that do not require any action on our part, i.e., the processing of passports and/or visas.

# **Does NOAA obtain official passports and visas for invitational travelers on foreign travel?**

No. NOAA is not responsible for official passports and visas for invitational travelers on foreign travel. Invitational travelers are expected to obtain personal passports and visas.

However, NOAA will reimburse passport and visa fees for invitational travelers on foreign travel when approved on the travel authorization.

# What do I submit to the NTO for an invitational traveler on foreign travel?

You will submit 2 copies of an approved travel authorization with the following statement annotated in the remarks section of the travel authorization: “The individual named above is traveling at the invitation of the U.S. Government. Although not a formal representative of the U.S. Government, this individual is considered of sufficient character and qualification to participate on this mission.” A “Defensive Travel Briefing” must also be included.

# How does the NTO process a foreign travel package?

Once all of the necessary documents have been processed, the NTO will forward a copy of the approved travel authorization, the official passport containing visas, if applicable, to the travel contact, or designee. Upon receipt of the foreign travel package, the travel contact and the traveler should review all documents for completion and accuracy.



# Official Passports



# As a NOAA employee traveling to a foreign country on official business, am I required to obtain an official passport?

Yes. All NOAA employees traveling OCONUS on official business **must** obtain an official passport and official visas, if required, before leaving the United States. An official passport cannot be obtained for travel to Taiwan, and is not required for travel between the United States and U.S. territories. U.S. territories include American Samoa, Guam, Midway Islands, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, and Wake Island. The NTO strongly urges employees to carry a certified birth certificate when traveling between the U.S. and U.S. territories to avoid unnecessary problems. However, if you have an official or personal passport, you are expected to use your official or personal passport instead of birth evidence.

# What is the processing-time for official passports?

The processing-time for official passports is 4 to 6 weeks and is dictated by the Department of State (DOS). Passport applications submitted with less than 4-6 weeks processing-time **must** include an emergency justification letter addressed to the DOS, Chief of Passport Services. The emergency justification does not guarantee that the foreign travel package will be processed in time for travel.



# Where do I obtain passport forms for official travel?

All passport forms (DS-11, DS-82, DS-19, DS-64) **must be completed on line** and printed on paper so the applicant can sign and date the application. Passport applications that print on more than one sheet of paper must be printed on one-sided sheets of paper and cannot be printed on one sheet of paper back-to-back. Passport applications can be found at [www.travel.state.gov/passport](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport). Each on-line passport application contains a 2-D Barcode, which enables the DOS to populate encrypted data, filled out by the applicant, into their system.

**NOTE:** NMFS employees must annotate “CRMF” and all other employees must annotate “CROA” in the “Mail Passport to” section of the application, followed by “Washington, D.C., 20036. All employees will indicate the following address in the “Mail Passport to” section of the application: NTO, 20020 Century Blvd, Suite 1C, Germantown, MD 20874. You will need to indicate your home address in the “Permanent Address” section of the application.

# Is there a charge for official passports?

No. There is no charge for official passports since they are deemed no-fee passports. However, applicants who use the “DS-11, Application for Passport” may be charged a processing fee which is reimbursable via a travel voucher. NOTE: If you expect to travel frequently, you may request a additional visa pages, once you get low.

# How does the NTO process first time applicants?

1<sup>st</sup> time applicants will utilize the “DS-11, Application for Passport”. DS-11 forms are used when the employee has **never** been issued a passport (either personal or official), or if you have a passport that was issued **more** than 15 years ago. Once notified that the DS-11 will be used, the NTO will send you an original and a photocopy of a letter of authorization. You will need to apply in person at the nearest Passport Office, Clerk of the Circuit Court, or Federal District Court, and provide a photo ID, along with the following paperwork to a certified passport agent:

- an original and photocopy of a letter of authorization provided by the NTO,
- a “DS-11, Application for Passport” completed on-line and printed on one-sided sheets of paper and **cannot be signed until** you appear in person in front of a certified passport agent,
- two passport-size photographs (2"x 2"), and
- a birth certificate with a raised seal.

Once you are sworn in by a certified passport agent, all of the above mentioned paperwork will be express mailed to the DOS in Washington, D.C. for processing. Once complete, the DOS will forward the new official passport to the NTO. The NTO will express mail the passport to the traveler to be signed for future visas. Allow four to six weeks processing time for DS-11 forms (not including visas).

# How does the NTO process renewal applicants?

Renewal applicants will utilize the “DS-82, Passport Application by Mail”. The DS-82 is used if you have a passport (either personal or expired official) that was issued within the last 15 years. You will submit the following paperwork to the NTO:

- a DS-82 form which must be completed on-line and printed on one-sided sheets of paper (original signature and date required),
- two passport-size photographs (2"x 2"), and
- either a personal or official passport issued within the last 15 years.

The NTO will submit the above mentioned paperwork to the DOS for processing. Once complete, the DOS will forward the new official passport to the NTO. The NTO will express mail the passport to the traveler to be signed for future visas. Allow four weeks processing time for DS-82 forms (not including visas). NOTE: Any personal documentation, such as a personal passport, an expired official passport, or a birth certificate used in this process will be returned to the traveler upon completion of the travel package.



# What are the passport photo requirements?

Passport photos **must** be 2" x 2" (excluding white borders), and must have a white or off-white background. The applicant's image must be centered in the photograph with a 1/2" space between the top of the applicant's head and the top edge of the photograph. Pictures must be cut down to correct size and must match the template provided on the passport application. Pictures not in conformation will be rejected. See the following DOS website for further information:

[www.travel.state.gov/passport](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport) .

# What form do I use when I need to make changes to my official passport?

For passport changes, you will submit a “DS-19, Passport Amendment/Validation Application” which must be completed on-line and printed on one-sided sheets of paper (original signature and date required), to the NTO along with the official passport. The DS-19 form is used to correct a name and/or descriptive data in the passport, to add visa supplement pages to the passport, or to extend the validity of a limited passport. The NTO will submit the above mentioned paperwork to the DOS for processing. Once complete, the DOS will forward the official passport with corrections to the NTO. Allow at least 4 weeks processing time for DS-19 forms (not including visas). **NOTE:** Descriptive data changes are shown on the back page of the passport.

# What form do I use if my official passport is lost or stolen?

You must notify the NTO **immediately** if your official passport is lost or stolen. Once notified, the NTO will send you an original and a photocopy of a letter of authorization. You will need to reapply in person at the nearest Passport Office, Clerk of the Circuit Court, or Federal District Court. You will need to provide a photo ID and submit:

- an original and photocopy of a letter of authorization provided by the NTO,
- a “DS-64, Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport”, completed on-line and printed on paper (original signature and date required),
- a “DS-11, Application for Passport” completed on-line and printed on one-sided sheets of paper and **cannot be signed** until you appear in person in front of a certified passport agent,
- a memo of explanation supported by police documentation (if possible),
- two passport-size photographs (2"x 2"), and
- a birth certificate with a raised seal.

Once you are sworn in by a certified passport agent, you will sign the DS-11, Passport Application form and all of the above mentioned paperwork will be express mailed to the DOS in Washington, D.C. for processing. Once complete, the DOS will forward the new official passport to the NTO. The NTO will express mail the passport to the traveler to be signed for future visas. Allow four to five weeks processing time for lost/stolen passports (not including visas). **NOTE:** Passports issued via the lost/stolen form may be issued as a special, limited passport not to exceed one year and will need to be renewed via the DS-82 form prior to the end of the expiration date.

# What do I do with my official passport when I return from official travel?

DOS security requirements dictate that all official passports be returned to the NTO for safekeeping in the official passport repository upon completion of foreign travel. Frequent foreign travelers or those on foreign blanket travel authorizations may retain official passports in a locked safe in their offices. **Official passports are the property of the Government, and are not the personal property of the traveler. Official passports must never be kept at home.**



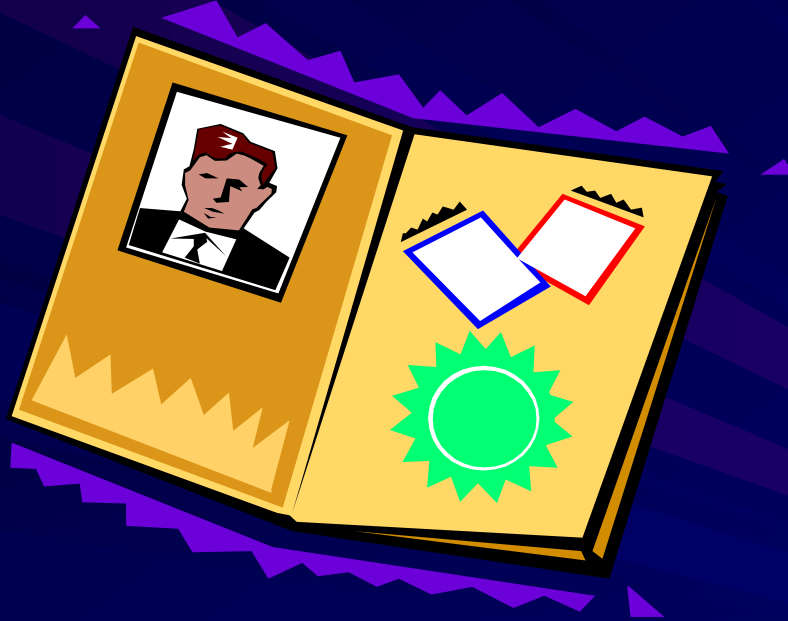
# What do I do with my official passport upon leaving Government service?

Upon leaving Government service, employees **must** return all valid official passports to the NTO or NMFS for disposition. However, you may retain any invalid official passport.

# Can I keep my official passport for a souvenir?

Yes. Employees who wish to retain their official passport for a souvenir must return their official passport with a memorandum of explanation to the NTO. The NTO will forward the official passport to the Department of State for cancellation. After cancellation, the official passport will be returned to the traveler for a souvenir.

# VISAS



# What is a visa?

A visa is a stamp affixed in a passport which allows you to enter and exit a foreign country.

# What is the processing-time for visas?

The processing-time for visas are dictated by the various embassies. A 10 – 15 business day processing-time is required to obtain visas for most countries. A 15 – 20 business day processing-time is required to obtain visas for China, Russia, and Vietnam, and a 2 month processing-time is required to obtain visas for Cuba.

# How do I obtain a visa(s) in my official passport?

You will submit your official passport and any applicable visa documentation to the NTO for processing. Visa requirements vary for each country. Some countries may require a visa application, and some may require visa photos or letters of invitation. Most countries require that the passport be valid at least 6 months or longer beyond the dates of travel before a visa can be issued.



# **Is there a listing I should use when verifying visa requirements for official travel?**

Yes. You will use the “Visa Requirements for Official Travel” listing (reference: NOAA Travel Regulation, Chapter 301-7.3) when verifying visa requirements for official travel. Do not use the “Foreign Entry Requirements” listing published by the DOS since it contains visa requirements for personal and private industry travel and differs from the visa requirements for official travel.

# Where do I obtain visa applications for official travel?

Current visa applications can be found at

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/FT.visareq.doc>



# How do I read the “Visa Requirements for Official Travel” listing?

You should note the following when reading the “Visa Requirements for Official Travel:”

- **“No visa required”** indicates the employee travels on their official passport **only**; and
- **“Visa required”** indicates a visa is required, but applications and pictures are not required. When a visa is required, the NTO will submit applicable paperwork with the official passport to the appropriate embassy for a visa. Please note, pictures must be recent 2”x2” color photos (not photocopied) unless otherwise specified; and
- **Original signatures are required on each visa application.**

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

